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Debate Assignment #1 Econ Article Analysis Paper Notes

1. Market concentration brings about a lack of competition in the private prison sector. Monopolistic in nature
2. Because the Prison population exploded in the 1980s and the US has the highest rate of incarceration today (check fact and reference potentially), I feel like states would contract with the private prisons regardless whether the care is adequate or not because they need to put the incarcerated somewhere and private prisons are more convenient than public prisons. The well being of the prisoners isn’t much of a concern.
3. I didn’t know that private prisons are product of the political economy because they are way easier to proliferate than public prisons.
4. There is also the problem of private prison lobbies influencing policies like increasing mandatory minimums because this increases their bottom line indirectly. Lobbying by 3 private prisons was 2,000,000 vs 66,000 by a top public correctional officers association.
5. Over incarceration is incentivized which is burdensome on the taxpayer.
6. Evidence to show private prisons are more efficient than their public counterparts is limited and is not strong - the think tank is moderate liberal so this should be met with some skepticism.
7. Private prisons are required to release many details of their operations including costs which makes it difficult to make cost comparisons - this should be changed.
8. The government accountability office has concluded multiple times that the data are not sufficient to definitively claim either type of prison is more cost effective.
9. Mississippi is a state where it is easier to compare private and public prison costs because it oversees and collects data from both.
10. Most of the savings that are made from private prisons are from paying lower salaries to correctional officers (staff) and having fewer officers than their public counterparts. Officer to inmate ratios; public - 1:4.9, private - 1:6.9; the report cedes  that this could be due to operational innovations however it did say OSHA ruled against a private prison firm for severe understaffing and under training. FBI launched criminal investigation in Idaho where officers compensated for understaffing by negotiating with prison gang leaders.
11. Higher turnover rate among private correctional officers. Turnover rates were 90% for private vs 24% for public in Texas prisons.
12. At the same costs, studies differed but some said private prisons offered better quality while others said there was no difference in quality. The DOJ’s investigation into private prisons found worse quality in private prisons in terms of safety and security - this is logical.
13. The report details policies to be enacted like aligning incentives and redefining the cost and quality criterion for private prisons.